such as, creating basic research-oriented infrastructure in establishing research hubs/labs at IITs at Delhi, Kanpur, Madras, Mumbai and Kharagpur, conducting field trials and tests, and connectivity charges. It also includes payment to MIT Media Lab, USA to support and collaborate with Media Lab Asia under the Research Collaboration Agreement between the two.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Telephone exchanges In villages

†5278. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-items which appeared in the Rashtriya Sahara', dated the 2nd April, 2002 under the caption 'Gaavon Kay liyay sthapit teen hazaar exchange bijli kay intazaar main';

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to start these exchanges and by when these would start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR); (a) to (c) the information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Post Offices with Internet/E-mail/Computer facilities

5279. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) 'he number of post offices in the country both rural and urban, where internet, e-mail and computer facilities are made available for the past five years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government have formulated any policy to expand these facilities through post offices or any other means to bring about communication revolution in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The Department has computerised 1,664 post offices in the country where traffic is heavy. All these post offices are located in urban areas. None of the rural post offices have been provided with either e-mail, Internet or computer facilities at present. A new product called e-Post based on Internet has been launched in 203 Head Post Offices in 5 States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Goa and Maharashtra.

(b) to (d) Computerisation of post offices is based on traffic analysis and the likely return on investments thereof. Computerisation of urban post offices is taken in a phased manner as per the availability of funds and on approval from Planning Commission. There is no proposal at present to piovide Internet e-mail and computer facilities to rural post offices in the country.

Categories of telephone users

5280. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(c) whether Government propose to create 17 categories of telephone users which would be branded as commercial;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the commercial users would now have to pay an additional amount of Rs. 60 per month as rent and the number of free calls would be limited to 30;

(f) if so, since when and the reasons therefor;

(g) whether Government propose to impose an additional levy on the residential phones too; and